

# LINSLADE

## CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL DRAFT

DECEMBER 2009



A conservation area is an *area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*. This document is one of a series of up-to-date conservation area character appraisals published by Central Bedfordshire Council.

The purpose of the appraisal is to define which features contribute to the special interest, what is significant and what requires preservation. Opportunities for enhancement are also identified in the appraisal.



## CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Summary	2
3.0 Location and Setting	3
4.0 Historical Development	3
5.0 Character	8
6.0 Appearance	10
7.0 Boundary Changes	25
8.0 Opportunities for enhancement	26

## APPENDICES

### 1 References

### 2 Listed Buildings



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Linslade Conservation Area was designated by Bedfordshire County Council in 1974. It was reviewed and extended in the Leighton-Linslade and Heath and Reach Local Plan in 1985. It was again reviewed in 1993 and further extended in the 1995 South Bedfordshire Local Plan. The designated area presently covers 11.330ha. Linslade Recreation Ground is recognised as a park of historic interest in the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review, adopted January 2004.
- 1.2 This document assesses the setting, character and appearance of the conservation area. It also identifies opportunities for improving the character of the area. The appraisal is, therefore, the basis for the management of the Linslade Conservation Area through the planning system.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The special interest that justifies designation of the Linslade Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors, including:
- A well-defined grid of streets comprising Victorian Terraces and semi-detached houses with good survival of timber sashes, stucco mouldings and dressings and classical doorcases with traditional timber doors
  - High quality corner buildings and survival of public houses, inns, hotels and lodging houses which served the Victorian hunt visitors to Linslade (bound for the Rothchild estates)
  - Landscaped park / recreation ground west of and forming the important setting to the Church of St Barnabas
  - Almost complete survival of stone kerbs, some stone flagged steps and historic street and footpath surfaces including blue brick
  - Carriageways (particularly the decorated arches) between houses are a particular positive historic feature
  - Interesting mix of materials including ironstone for flank walls and boundary walls and a wide variety of brick stock giving a strong texture to the area
  - Mostly consistent building lines with houses set on the roadside to the back of pavements



### 3.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

- 3.1 Linslade lies less than a mile west of Leighton Buzzard town centre, separated from it by the Grand Union Canal and River Ousel. To the north lies the hamlet of Old Linslade.
- 3.2 Victorian Linslade, the site of the conservation area, is situated to the west of the River Ousel, contained between the canal to the east and railway line to the west. Twentieth and twenty-first century Linslade extends to the west beyond the railway line near to the A4146.
- 3.3 The conservation area comprises a rectangular area of land with the Church of St Barnabas at its centre. The area is made up of a characteristic grid of Victorian terraced streets with a planned tree-lined park / recreation ground to the west of the church.



### 4.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The original village of Linslade (now a hamlet referred to as Old Linslade) dates back to the eleventh century. Its church, St Mary the Virgin, marks the site of the previous settlement, some two miles from the town's present parish church of St Barnabas. The site of the old settlement remains as earthworks in the fields around the church and manor house.
- 4.2 The manor of Old Linslade, referred to as Hlincgeladae in 975, was held by Alwin, a man of Queen Edith, before the Norman Conquest. In 1086 the manor was assessed at 15 hides held by Hugh de Beauchamp, a Bedfordshire Baron. The village became a market town in the last half of the thirteenth century and had a yearly eight-day fair. These grants were made possible due to the Holy Well of Linslade which attracted many pilgrims. The initial prosperity of the settlement was short lived and in 1299 the Bishop of Lincoln prohibited pilgrimages to the well under pain of excommunication. Thereafter no accounts of either the fair or market appear. Nevertheless the settlement continued to exist and in the fifteenth century enough money was available for the rebuilding of the Church of St Mary the Virgin.
- 4.3 The present town, which abuts Leighton Buzzard, forms the civil parish of Leighton-Linslade. The town was previously in Buckinghamshire until it was transferred to Bedfordshire in 1965.

- 4.4 Today's Linslade originates from a settlement known as Chelsea which grew up south of the original village. It remained small into the early nineteenth century when there were still only 35 houses in the parish with a population of 203. The arrival of key transport networks signalled the start of Linslade's prosperity. In 1805 the Grand Junction Canal (later known as the Grand Union Canal) was opened on the Linslade side of the River Ousel. This was followed by the railway line, built by the London & North Western Railway in 1838. Leighton Buzzard station was sited some distance west of the canal following concerns by the canal industry on the effect of the railway on their business.



The Grand Union Canal

- 4.5 Linslade developed as a direct result of its proximity to the fashionable hunting grounds of the Vale of Aylesbury. The area was popularised due to the residency of the Rothchild family from the 1840s with estates at Tring, Aston Clinton, Mentmore Towers, Ascott House and Waddesdon. The arrival of the railway in 1838 brought the Buckinghamshire hunting countryside within easy reach of London. Hunters, hounds and horses were transported long distances to hunting meets. Hotels, Inns and lodging houses sprang up to cater for the visitors, hence the noticeably large number of carriageways to inns and houses to accommodate stabling. This activity is recalled today in the names of local public houses and hotels including The Hunt Hotel (c.1850) which, facing the station, was the premier destination for huntsmen in the town. This relationship has now been somewhat compromised by later development to the south side of the railway (outside the conservation area).





The Hunt Hotel

- 4.6 The town developed as a mix of ‘artisan’ and opulent town housing. Local trades were geared to the hunts with blacksmiths, horsebreakers, saddlers, coach builders, hoteliers and innkeepers. Prestigious commercial hotels in close proximity to the railway station included the Elephant & Castle c.1840, the Swan (later the Railway Hotel) c.1840, rebuilt following a fire in 1904, The Hunt Hotel (formerly the Railway Hotel) c.1850 and the Clarendon Hotel (New Road c.1867 (now converted to flats).
- 4.7 Such was the prosperity of the town that by 1840 calls were made for a new parish church to cater for its growing population which now numbered 869.
- 4.8 Construction began on the church in 1848 to the designs of the architect Benjamin Ferrey. A new vicarage and school for 200 pupils were constructed around this time. A Baptist Chapel had already been constructed in 1843. The completion of St Barnabas’ in 1849 marks the point that Chelsea new town became Linslade. The success of the town saw its population continue to rise, so that in 1861 a Primitive Methodist Chapel was built and by 1881 the town’s population numbered 1724 and was still steadily increasing.



The Church of St Barnabas with the vicarage (right) and former school (centre)

- 4.9 Linslade continued to grow into the twentieth century. After the Second World War the town experienced rapid expansion. In the late 1960s a sustained period of growth began which saw the construction of major housing estates. By the end of the 1970s the town had more than doubled in size. Since the 1980s expansion has been limited by Green Belt.

# ORDNANCE SURVEY 1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION 1890

## With Conservation Area Boundary







## 5.0 CHARACTER

- 5.1 Linslade conservation area is characterised by its varied mix of Victorian housing reflecting the early grand and prestigious nature of the visitors and the later inevitable speculative development. The building stock ranges from modest terraces, many adorned with features such as bays, decorative keystones and elegant doorcases, to impressive villas, prominent public houses and fashionable hotels.
- 5.2 The layout and development of the town is key to its character. The streets are clustered together, separated from the railway line and Leighton Buzzard Station by the recreation ground. This important green space, attractively laid out with paths and avenues of pollarded trees, is a major feature within the conservation area which was initially saved from development by London financier and local benefactor Henry Finch.



Linslade Recreation Ground with the 1903 drinking fountain commemorating benefactor Henry Finch

- 5.3 The varied topography of the area is also important. The land slopes away from the railway line to the canal resulting in excellent townscape views east along Old Road. On both Old Road and Ship Road particularly the sloping gradient creates a dynamic streetscape with stepped building heights. The modest scale

of the two and three-storey buildings is a noticeable feature. The nature of the buildings mean that two-storey terraces, larger villas, and three-storey corner sites all share a similar scale with no high rise developments dominating the skyline. This makes the landmark towers and spires of the surrounding churches all the more prominent in townscape defining views throughout the conservation area.



View east along Old Road (with St Andrew's spire, Leighton Buzzard in the distance)

- 5.4 Built form within the conservation area shares a strong building line with houses and terraces set on the street (e.g. Old Road, New Road, Ship Road) and prominent corner buildings, larger villas and modern infill set back off the roadside in larger plots (for example Wing Road, Church Road).
- 5.5 There are many attractive groups of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. These include good survivals of terraces, for example, Ship Road, nineteenth and twentieth century shop fronts, for example No. 8 New Road, fine villas, for example The Hollies, Church Road and attractive former lodging houses and inns with carriageway arches, for example No. 27 New Road. These quality buildings are interspersed with more modest terraces and semi-detached houses, many of which have lost their original features including doors, windows and roof coverings.
- 5.6 Today the majority of Victorian Linslade's buildings are residential. Its close proximity and links to Leighton Buzzard have placed the commercial centre of

Leighton-Linslade in Leighton Buzzard's town centre. There are still occasional shops on Old Road and New Road and a survival of five public houses comprising The Hunt Hotel, The Buckingham Arms, The Bedford Arms, The White Horse and The Ship Inn. This surviving mix of uses is a key component of the vitality of the area and gives a sense of the former character of historic Linslade.

- 5.7 The speculative developments led to the town's distinctive layout which was built around, in some cases, pre-existing roads and footpaths. A historic footpath still exists which once led from the railway line, over the pedestrian bridge, across to Church Road and through to New Road, emerging by the Baptist Chapel, cutting a diagonal line through the housing plots.

## **6.0 APPEARANCE**

- 6.1 Buildings in the conservation area are predominantly of red brick construction but with a good mix of browns, yellows, blues, colour-washed brick etc. Bonding is mainly Flemish with occasional English (The Forster Institute) and rat-trap (the alley way walls between Church Road and New Road). There are also a number of rendered buildings painted in shades of white or cream. Some buildings exhibit painted ashlar quoins. Red brick stacks are common, occasionally yellow brick with yellow or terracotta clay pots. Roofs comprise natural slate, clay interlocking tiles or concrete interlocking tiles. It is noticeable that there is considerable loss of original natural slate roofs.





Illustration of the variety of brick colours, bonding, colour-washing and (tuck) pointing

- 6.2 Key buildings are constructed of ironstone namely the church and school. The churchyard has an excellent well maintained ironstone boundary wall running the length of Vicarage Road.





Churchyard wall, Vicarage Road

- 6.3 Carriageways and their associated decorative arches are a particular feature of most streets. These served rear yards and stabling for hunt visitors. Some are now blocked, but many survive either as open archways or with double timber doors. Some, for example No. 27 New Street, are grander than others.



Rusticated carriageway, Waterloo Road

- 6.4 As with many speculative developments there are some fine architectural details on many villas and terraces. These include a range of decorative timber doorcases, some with simple fanlights above, panel doors, stone flagged steps to doors (particularly New Road and Wing Road), and an uncommonly good survival of cast iron boot scrapers (Church Road).

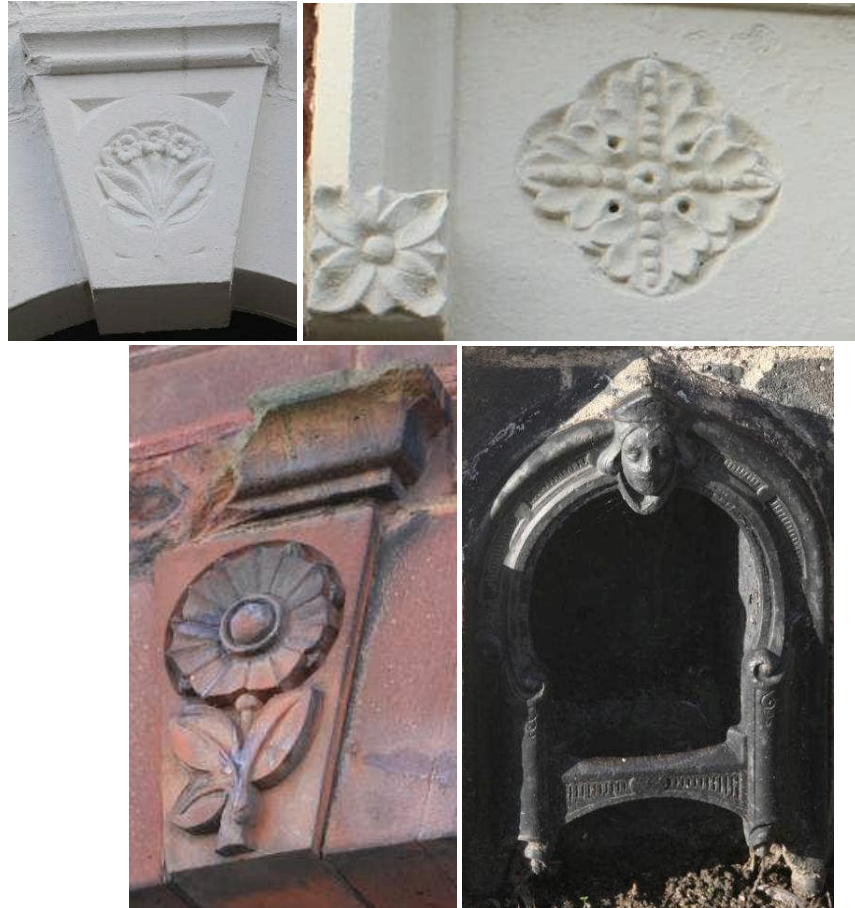


A range of classical style doorcases found within the conservation area

- 6.5 The conservation area has a good survival and mix of timber framed single glazed vertical sliding sash windows. Many have classical window surrounds, often stuccoed, some very simple others with corbel brackets , decorative label stops and mouldings. These details are also repeated on doorcases. Elaborate,



oversized and decorated keystones to window, door and carriageway arches and rusticated voussoirs are also a distinct feature of the built form. Bay windows are a feature of some streets, occasionally classically adorned e.g. with Corinthian columns (Waterloo Road east side) or pilasters.



Floral keystones and dressings and attractive bootscapers

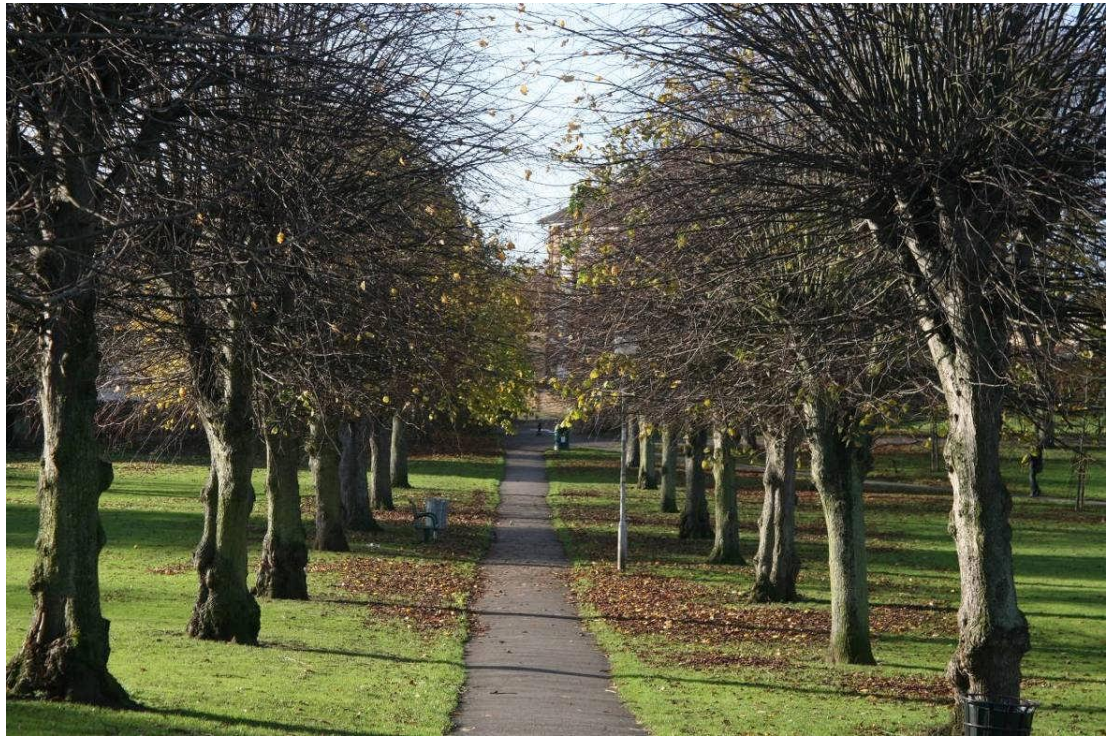
- 6.6 There is a very good (and unusual) survival of original granite kerbstones to a number of streets (Old Road, New Road, Ship Road, and Vicarage Road). These are occasionally combined with blue brick drainage gullies (Vicarage Road). On Ship Road, matching blue brick kerbs, pavers and gulleys survive intact. The alley way, a historic footpath, leading from Church Road to New Road is surfaced with blue bricks and occasional Staffordshire Blue Diamond Chequered pavers. There are stretches of walls, often red brick, with ironstone to the churchyard wall (Vicarage Road).





### **Linslade Church and recreation ground**

- 6.7 The church of St Barnabas stands on an area of flat land east of Leighton Buzzard railway station. Linslade recreation ground lies at a lower level between the station and church. There is a good group of buildings comprising; church, school (now church hall) and vicarage, all mid nineteenth century forming an excellent set piece. The ironstone boundary wall on Vicarage Road sets the churchyard apart from the rest of the conservation area.
- 6.8 The recreation ground provides an attractive backdrop to the church. Arranged around a network of tree-lined paths, the area functions as a valuable amenity space. As well as the pollarded horse chestnut lining the paths there are large specimen trees which strongly characterise this part of the conservation area.



Tree-lined avenue, Linslade recreation ground



- 6.9 There are many pleasant and attractive views across the recreation ground taking in the backs of houses on New Road to the north and the grand (original) entrance to the Hunt Hotel and church group to the east.
- 6.10 The 1903 drinking fountain commemorating Henry Finch, is a key local landmark in a park otherwise free from built structures. The recreation ground's street furniture is limited to standard modern street lamps, benches and litter bins.

The southern entrance to the park is defined by a well designed curving wall with attractive coping details.



### The Canal

- 6.11 This area, a transitional zone between Linslade and Leighton Buzzard, is a key link back to Linslade's early nineteenth century development. The area is characterised by its large buildings, busy traffic junction and historic canal wharfs. The canal opens somewhat to a small basin to the east of the road bridge. *Please note, The old canal basins, either side of the road bridge, are currently outside the conservation area but are recommended for inclusion.*
- 6.12 Little remains of the once prosperous canal side industry. The basins survive as does an excellent tow path brick bridge which once led to Grant's Wharf, but has since been filled in and is presently used as a car park. Part of the stone setts lining the tow path remain under the road bridge and cast iron mooring points on the east bank of the canal, north of the bridge, ensure the canal continues to be used by working boats, house boats and pleasure barges. Canal side trees, including mature willows, add to the attractive appearance of the canal corridor.



The historic canal bridge with modern development and car park beyond (please note this is presently outside the conservation area)

- 6.13 The striking three-storey, red brick Nos. 24-30 Leighton Road, are a prominent landmark drawing views away from the traffic junction to the architecture and



partially closing the view north along Wing Road. The building's east elevation responds to the canal, its double height oriel window overlooking the canal at Whichello's Wharf. The large Tooleys Mill building on Old Road retains some of its industrial character; distinctive semi-circular first and second floor windows. Opposite is the statutory Grade II listed Bedford Arms, one of Linslade's earlier public houses which would have served the canal trade. It survives as a good example of the town's fine building stock with its timber sashes, bold doorcases and natural slate roof.



View beyond the road junction to Nos. 24-30 Leighton Road



- Wing Road**
- 6.14 This part of the conservation area is a busy through route with a very different character to Linslade's Victorian core. The wide road is flanked both sides by terraces (with varying degrees of surviving original features) with some fine detached and semi-detached villas set back in small gardens lined by boundary walls. The west side of the road is disrupted by the loss in places of the otherwise strong building line. An area has been cleared of a house and outbuildings and redeveloped with the modern three-storey flats of Ivester Court (outside the conservation area) and a large tarmac car park, now serving the Ship Inn.

- 6.15 Positive buildings include, but are not limited to; the Ship Inn (with an attractive etched glass door bearing the name), the former Police Court and No. 100, an interesting double gabled property with ornate ashlar dressings, ground floor bays and central, first floor stained glass window, set behind a low boundary wall with formal front garden. No. 104 Wing Road, currently outside the conservation area, is a splendid example of a house complete with original features.



No. 100 Wing Road



- 6.16 Features of note include modest outbuildings to the side of residences, a large mix of housing styles and variety of materials used to good effect.
- 6.17 There are well-defined views northeast along Wing Road from the junction with Victoria Road, well-balanced by two key trees either side of the road. Views west up Ship Road are characterised by high quality streetscape and terminated by the tower of St Barnabas' Church. No. 71 Wing Road, with its boldly painted ashlar dressings (presently outside the conservation area), provides a positive visual stop to the view southeast down Victoria Road.





View north-east along Wing Road



### Waterloo Road & Victoria Road

- 6.18 This character area, south of Linslade recreation ground, is largely defined by the relatively high density terraces on Waterloo Road which rise gently along the street. Bay windows characterise this part of the conservation area, those on the east side of the street adorned with classical columns with acanthus leaves. This floral theme is carried through to the decorative keystones above doorways and carriage arches with a range of spring flowers including primroses, daffodils and crocuses.
- 6.19 The well-defined building line of houses set on the roadside on Waterloo Road is less well defined in Victoria Road. A new build of 2002, on the junction with Waterloo Road, and Victoria Garage are both set back some way off the road side. The change in building line and loss of enclosure at the garage site provides attractive open views north to trees and the church tower.



Nos. 12-18 Waterloo Road



- 6.20 Positive buildings include No. 50, No. 42 (a former wine merchants), the Foster Institute (a positive visual stop at the end of Vicarage Road) and the gabled Nos. 12-18 Waterloo Road. Features of note include enamel road signs and a surviving fluted cast iron lamp base on the south side of Victoria Road.

### Linslade's Victorian Core



- 6.21 This area forms the main section of the conservation area. It comprises Old Road, New Road, the curving Church Road and short Ship Road which run almost parallel to one another east-west and the linking Vicarage Road and Wing Road which are orientated north-south.
- 6.22 The area is characterised by the grid pattern of roads which contain an eclectic mix of housing types and materials. The gently sloping topography of the roads, falling from west to east, creates a stepped roofline and good views east, especially to the spire of Leighton Buzzard's parish church.



The Hollies, Church Road

- 6.23 Old Road, New Road, Ship Road and Wing Road predominantly comprise modest two-storey semi-detached houses and terrace groups, with occasional three-storey 'town houses', all with a strong building line set hard against the pavement. The attractive terrace on Ship Road has a particularly distinct building line creating enclosure to the road. Some of the terraced houses on the west side of Wing Road have suffered from the substantial loss of original windows, doors and roofing slate. Church Road and Vicarage Road contain a selection of more affluent detached and semi-detached villas and town houses. Modern infill generally pays little regard to the character of Linslade's historic building stock. Some, including No. 22 Church Road, follow the building line and scale of the streets whilst others such as Vicarage Close set houses back off the main road in a modern cul-de-sac plan. Larger buildings, such as The Hollies, Church Road and Bethel Baptist Church, New Road, stand out from the surrounding terraces and semi-detached houses.





Nos. 25-27 Church Road, note symmetrical composition including cast iron boot-scrappers

- 6.24 Positive buildings include a good group on Church Road comprising Toad Hall, The Coach House, and The Hollies. There are also a number of key unlisted buildings on corners and junctions including; the Buckingham Arms Old Road, Nos. 25-27 Church Road, the former Clarendon Hotel New Road, the Railway Hotel (now gutted by fire) and No. 16 Old Road.
- 6.25 A number of outbuildings and former stables survive to the rear (and sometimes to the sides) of properties, often hidden from view behind the carriageways. These are key to the understanding of the 'accommodation industry' of the town which catered for the hunt visitors. These buildings are essential to the understanding of the layout of the housing plots and where they survive in anything like their original form they make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.26 Features of note include the historic footpath which once led from the railway line, over the pedestrian bridge, across to Church Road and through to New Road, emerging by the Baptist Chapel. This surviving alley way, diagonal to the road, has an excellent sense of enclosure, its walls comprising rat trap bonded brick and sections of stone. Carriageways are frequently found in this area, the painted sign on the side of the White Horse public house which reads 'Good





Stabling' alludes to their former use. This area also contains the few surviving shop fronts, most to be found on the north side of New Road.



The character area contains a range of local features

## 7.0 BOUNDARY CHANGES

7.1 Consideration should be given to the following proposed amendments of the conservation area boundaries as shown on the management map:

1. Extension of the conservation area to encompass the historic canal basin to the south side of the road bridge and a section of the historic canal route closely related to the conservation area including the setting of former wharfage buildings (now heavily altered).

Reason:

The canal was an important feature in the early nineteenth century development of Linslade and this small section adjacent to the bridge and including the small basin and bridge to former wharfage should be included in the conservation area. The survival of bridges, original surfacing and the layout of the basin and canal provide key historic links to the canal industry. This area contributes to the special interest to the Linslade Conservation Area.

2. Extension of the conservation area to include a characteristic group of buildings with a good survival of historic architectural features comprising Nos. 65-71 Wing Road.

Reason:

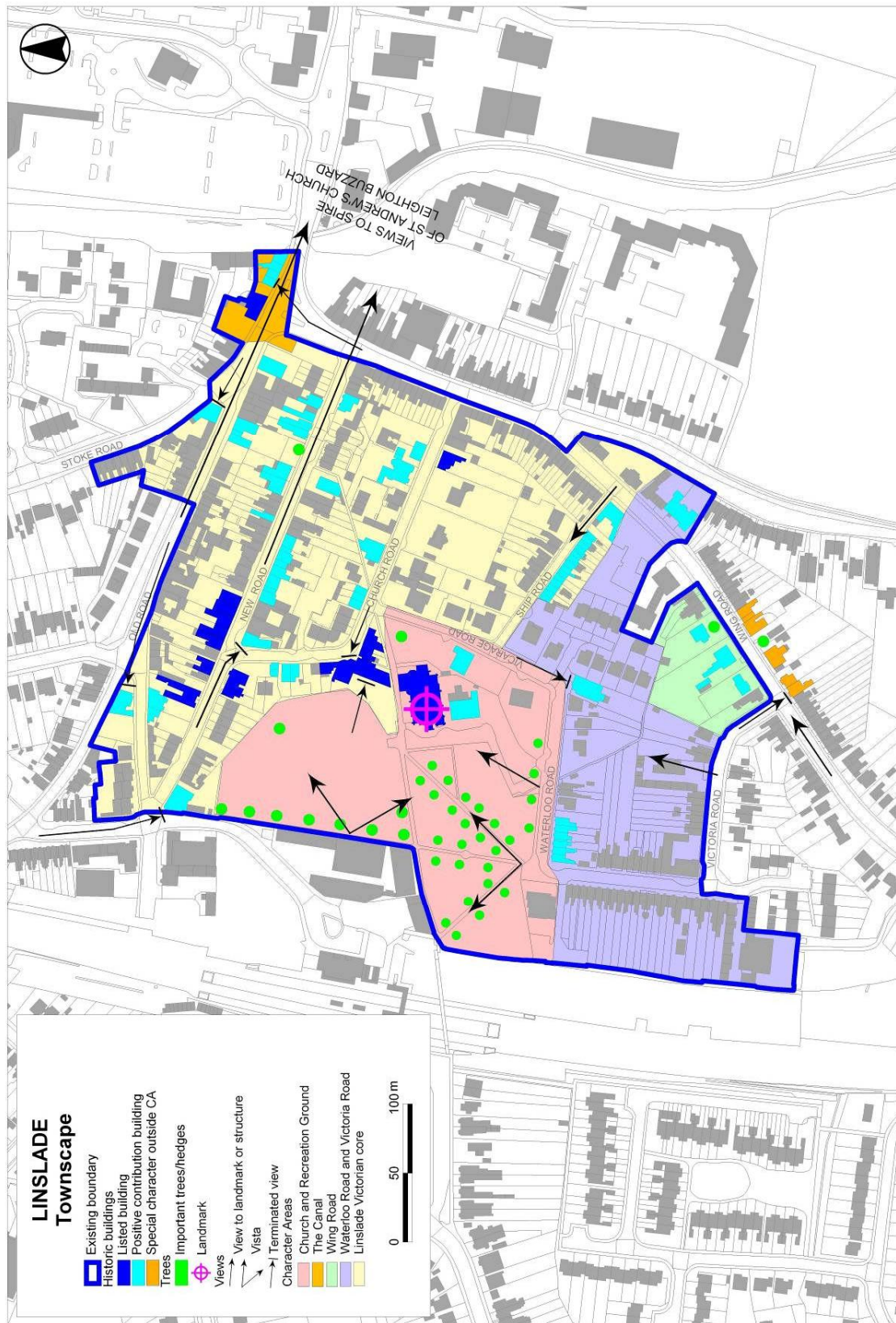
These buildings make a very important and positive contribution towards the special character of this section of Wing Road providing an example of Linslade's varied domestic architecture and exhibiting some attractive features such as timber sashes and classical style doorcases. The suggested extension also takes in contemporary outbuildings, a characteristic feature of Linslade.

## **8.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT**

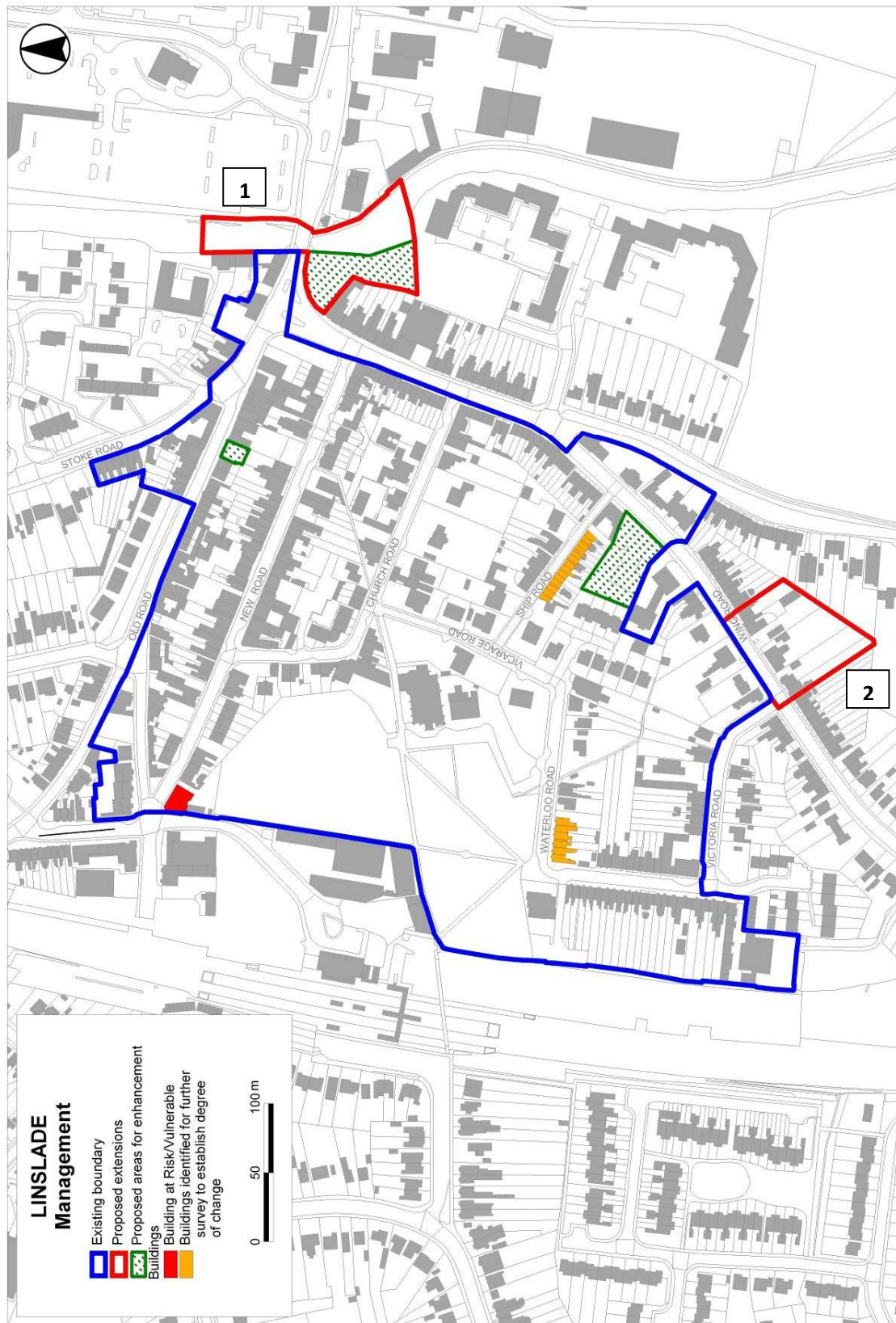
8.1 While the general condition of the conservation area is good, the following are considered as opportunities to enhance buildings and spaces:

- Improvements to the treatment of roadsides and footways including the surfacing of the road on the north side of St Barnabas' Church and the repair and replacement of pavers on the alley way between Church Road and New Road.
- Street furniture should be well-designed and co-ordinated, especially with regard to the recreation ground.
- Encouragement (particularly to utilities providers) to maintain surviving carriageways with their original surfacing which are a major feature of the conservation area.
- Encouragement to be given for the reinstatement of traditional doors and windows, particularly on Wing Road and Waterloo Road.
- Encouragement to be given to the reinstatement of natural slate roofs.
- Removal of unauthorised satellite dishes and advice provided on the careful placing of satellite dishes and an examination of possible alternatives.
- Careful consideration given to sites where enhancement schemes would benefit the character and appearance of the conservation area including the open parking area next to the Ship Inn, Wing Road, the plot of land next to Nos. 11-13 Old Road, and the canal side area south of the road bridge.
- Protection and repair of the 1903 drinking fountain on the recreation ground.
- Protection of the Railway Hotel, a building at risk, pending a decision on its future.
- A specific assessment of change should be established through survey for the Ship Road terrace and Nos. 9 -19 Waterloo Road.





This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Central Bedfordshire Council. Licence No. 100049029 (2009)



This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Central Bedfordshire Council. Licence No. 100049029 (2009)



## APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES

- Albion Archaeology – *Extensive Urban Survey for Bedfordshire; Leighton Buzzard Archaeological Assessment* – March 2005
- Ed. William Page – *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 3* – Victoria County History 1925
- Brown, M., Lawson, T., & Masters, J. - *The Old Pubs of Leighton Buzzard & Linslade* 1994
- Pevsner N – *The Buildings of England; Bedfordshire and the County of Huntingdon and Peterborough* 2002 Yale University Press
- <http://www.linslade-parish.org.uk/History>
- <http://www.leighton-linslade.com>

### Maps:

- Ordnance Survey – 1890 1:2500
- Ordnance Survey – 1901 1:2500
- Ordnance Survey – 1926 1:2500



## APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDINGS

### GRADE II

- BUXTON HOUSE, 3 CHURCH ROAD
- 13 CHURCH ROAD
- 15 CHURCH ROAD
- 17 CHURCH ROAD
- HUNT HOTEL, 19 CHURCH ROAD
- 21 CHURCH ROAD
- 40 AND 42 NEW ROAD
- 43 AND 45 NEW ROAD
- 44 AND 46 NEW ROAD
- 48 AND 50 NEW ROAD
- 52 AND 54 NEW ROAD
- 58 AND 60 NEW ROAD
- BEDFORD ARMS PUBLIC HOUSE, 2 OLD ROAD
- CHURCH OF ST BARNABAS, VICARAGE ROAD